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House supports Ford on CIA disclosures

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a precedent-setting victory for President Ford, the House blocked its intelligence committee Thursday night from publicly disclosing secrets without the President's approval.

The directive was approved 246 to 124 over objections of the committee majority that it would give the President and the intelligence agencies the power to censor the committee's final report to the House.

The directive was technically an amendment to a procedural resolution setting times for filing the report with the full House. The resolution later was approved by voice vote.

Supporters of the move to block the

secret disclosure, led by the intelligence committee's ranking Republican, Rep. Robert McClory of Illinois, said public disclosure would violate an agreement with President Ford.

"What agency do you think will provide us information if it thinks we cannot be trusted?" McClory said. "And that's the issue before us today: whether we in the House can be trusted."

But the committee's majority, including Chairman Otis G. Pike, D-N.Y., said there was no agreement with Ford to keep secret information out of the committee's final report to the House.

"If I thought the CIA was going to write the report, censor the report, on

the CIA," Pike told the House, "I would have had to either keep the report secret, or get Ford's approval, until it has time to see the report and decide if it should be made public."

The full House vote on the running secrecy fight between Ford and the intelligence committee was pressed by a resolution approved 9 to 7 by the House Rules Committee on Wednesday night.

It would prohibit the intelligence committee from putting secret information in its final report unless the report is kept secret or the committee gets Ford's clearance to publicly release it.

The secret information, most of it
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already publicly disclosed through news leaks, includes details on operations including U.S. submarine spying on Soviet missile firings and CIA covert aid to Angola and in the past to Italian political parties and Kurdish rebels.

The issue raises a confrontation between two branches of government over control of sensitive intelligence information. Such clashes usually are settled in negotiations and rarely come to a vote before a full chamber of Congress or in the courts.

Rep. Dale Milford, D-Tex. said that if the final report goes to the House as a secret document the House could decide any time in the future to make it public.

The committee and the President had worked out a compromise after a secrecy fight in September allowing Ford to prevent the committee from publicly disclosing secrets by personally

declaring that doing so would hurt U.S. national security.

But Pike and eight other members of the 13-member intelligence committee voted that the agreement with Ford could not dictate what the committee puts in its final official report to the House.

Milford and three committee Republicans contended, however, that the committee could not obtain secret information under the agreement with Ford against disclosure and then turn around and disclose the information in the final report.

The committee's senior Republican, Rep. Robert McClory of Illinois, said Ford's advisers filed 240 objections to the committee's final report. He said the committee rejected 169 of them, acceding on 67 and partially acceding on four others.

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